

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 SSM-03

IO-13 CU-02 INRE-00 (ISO) W

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O P 081544Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2475

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 180

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

COMPHIBRON SIX

COM THREE FOUR MAU

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8756

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 7-8

REF: BEIRUT 8729 (DTG 061537Z DEC 76)

1. SUMMARY. ATTENTION FOCUSED ON SARKIS' EFFORTS FORM
NEW GOVERNMENT, WITH HEAVY PRESS PLAY GIVEN TO LISTING
OF LIKELY CANDIDATES AND COMMENTS OF VARIOUS POLITICIANS.
BECHIR GEMAYEL VISITS WEST BEIRUT. PRESS DEC 7 REPORTS
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FIGHTING CONTINUES IN SOUTH AT BINT JBAYL AND SAF AL-HAWA,

BUT DEC 8 PAPERS CARRY NO INFORMATION ON MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH. TWENTY-FIVE PEOPLE KILLED IN FATAH-SAIQA CLASHES DEC 5-6 IN NAHR EL-BARED CAMP NEAR TRIPOLI. ON HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT DEC 7, ARAFAT MET WITH FATAH AND PLO, PERHAPS ON ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. REJECTION FRONT CRITICIZES ASF IN COMMUNIQUE DEC 6. PHALANGIST STUDENT DEMAND FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF BRANCHES OF WEST BEIRUT UNIVERSITIES IN EASTERN SECTOR OPPOSED BY UNIVERSITY OF LEBANON STUDENT LEADERSHIP. VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUE TO COME FORWARD WITH AID FOR LEBANON. EXPLOSIONS CONTINUE IN BEIRUT. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT SARKIS MET DEC 7 WITH KAMAL AL-ASSAD, RASHID KARAMI, PIERRE GEMAYEL, EMIR MAJID ARSLAN AND OTHERS, PRESUMABLY TO DISCUSS FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. KAMAL JUNBLATT, ALSO INVITED TO MEET WITH SARKIS, INSTEAD SENT TWO REPRESENTATIVES. CAMILLE CHAMOUN POSTPONED PLANNED VISIT TO DAMASCUS, ADDING TO SPECULATION THAT CABINET ANNOUNCEMENT IMMINENT. PAPERS CARRY VARYING ROSTERS OF LIKELY CANDIDATES. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT MADE THAT PARLIAMENT WILL SIT PROVISIONALLY AT MANSUR PALACE. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR SPECULATES PARLIAMENT TO BE ASKED GRANT EXCEPTIONAL POWERS TO NEW CABINET FOR SIX MONTHS.

3. MIXED VIEWS ON NEW GOVERNMENT. PIERRE GEMAYEL DEC 6 SAID PRESIDENT SARKIS "ENJOYS THE CONFIDENCE OF EVERYONE IN THE COUNTRY, IN THE ARAB WORLD AND ABROAD. WE REAFFIRM OUR TOTAL CONFIDENCE IN HIS CAPACITIES...HE ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHOICE OF A MINISTERIAL FORMULA WHICH CAN HELP IN THE NEXT PHASE...WE ARE NOT CONCERNED FOR THE MOMENT WITH THE FORM OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT...SINCE...IT WILL ONLY BE A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT." CAMILLE CHAMOUN HOWEVER CRITICIZED EXPECTED GOVERNMENT OF SIX OR EIGHT TECHNOCRATS, ADVOCATING INSTEAD "A STRONG GOVERNMENT IN THE FULL SENSE OF THE WORD." WE UNDERSTAND CHAMOUN STRONGLY OPPOSES RETURN OF CHEHABISTS TO POWER.

4. EAST-WEST DIALOG. PHALANGE PALADIN BECHIR GEMAYEL VISITED WEST BEIRUT, WITH HEAVY ASF SECURITY GUARD TO MEET WITH RIAD TAHA AND OTHER LEADERS OF "LEBANESE PROGRESSIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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GROUP." THEY DISCUSSED QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON AND AGREED TO HOLD MORE SUCH MEETINGS.

5. THE SOUTH. PRESS DEC 7 CONTINUED REPORTING ON SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION, BUT NOT IN DEC 8 ADDITIONS, PERHAPS REFLECTING GROWING SELF-CENSORSHIP. FIGHTING REPORTEDLY CONTINUED THROUGH DEC 7 IN AREA OF BINT JIBAYL AND SAF AL-HAWA AND ISRAELI ARTILLERY SHELLED BLIDA AND AY TARUN. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR

SAYS ISRAELIS REINFORCED GROUND POSITIONS ON HEIGHTS OVER-LOOKING HOULA AND ADAYSSE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LIBYAN SUPPLIES FOR LEFTISTS STILL COMING IN THROUGH TYRE. UN OBSERVER HAS TOLD US THAT CHRISTIAN FORCES IN AYN IBL ARE VERY WEAK AND COULD BE OVERRUN AT ANY TIME BY PALESTINIANS AND/OR LAA FORCES FROM BINT JBAYL. NO NEW MOVES BY ASF OR PRESIDENT SARKIS, AS QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE MEETING EXPECTED DEC 9.

6. FATAH-SAIQA CLASH. AFTER DEC 5 INCIDENT IN NAHR EL-BARED IN WHICH A FATAH OFFICER WAS KILLED, SECOND CLASH OCCURRED DEC 6 DURING VICTIM'S FUNERAL. WHEN FUNERAL PROCESSION PASSED SAIQA OFFICE, FATHER OF DECEASED INSTIGATED ATTACK ON OFFICE. TWENTY-FIVE PEOPLE WERE REPORTED KILLED AND FOUR WOUNDED. LEADERS OF CLAP AND PDFLP REPORTEDLY HAVE INTERVENED TO STOP QUARREL.

7. PALESTINIAN MODERATES. ARAFAT RETURNED TO BEIRUT DEC 7 AFTER VISITING BELGRADE AND BUCHAREST. DURING MEETINGS WITH FATAH AND PLO LEADERSHIPS, ALSO ATTENDED BY SAIQA AND PFLP-GC REPRESENTATIVES, L'ORIENT-LE JOUR SPECULATES HE MAY HAVE DISCUSSED FOREIGN ATTITUDES ON QUESTION OF FORMATION OF PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE. ACCORDING TO "AUTHORIZED PALESTINIAN SOURCES," PALESTINIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL WILL MEET DEC 12 IN DAMASCUS.

8. REJECTION FRONT. COMMUNIQUE ISSUED DEC 6 BY REJECTION FRONT ACCUSES ASF OF NUMEROUS PROVOCATIONS, INCLUDING NUMBER OF ROADBLOCKS IN LEFTIST AREAS. COMMUNIQUE STATED "SYRIAN REGIME IS STILL SEEKING TO LIQUIDATE THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE."

9. STUDENTS DIVIDED ON DECENTRALIZATION. PRESS REPORTED
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FURTHER DETAILS ON PHALANGIST STUDENT CONGRESS OF DEC 4-5 AND THAT GROUP DECIDED "THE WAR, FOR WHICH LEBANON HAS BEEN THE THEATRE, IS AN EXCLUSIVELY LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN WAR." RECTOR OF UNIVERSITY OF LEBANON, EDMUND NAIM, PRESIDED MEETING DEC 6 IN RESPONSE TO PHALANGIST CALL FOR ESTABLISHMENT IN EAST BEIRUT OF BRANCHES OF UNIVERSITIES LOCATED IN WESTERN SECTOR. HOWEVER, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL STUDENT UNION OF UNIVERSITY OF LEBANON DEC 7 DECLARED ITS OPPOSITION TO SEPARATE SECTIONS IN EAST BEIRUT.

10. RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. AN FAO MISSION HEADED BY EDUARD SAUMA EXPECTED ARRIVE IN BEIRUT IN NEXT FEW DAYS. CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER KARAMI DEC 7 ON INITIAL GIFT OF 20,000 TONS OF PL-480 FOODSTUFFS TO BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH CARITAS IN LEBANON. FIRST SHIP IN

NINE MONTHS TO ENTER PORT OF BEIRUT IS EXPECTED TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SHIP, ABOUT DEC 15.

11. BEIRUT: SECURITY SITUATION. EXPLOSIVES PLANTED IN TRACADERO GAMBLING HOUSE/CAFE IN JOUNIEH COMPLETELY DESTROYED BUILDING DEC 6. PAPERS REPORT HEAVY EXPLOSION SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT DEC 7 IN VERDUN AREA, THOUGH NO DETAILS PROVIDED. LEBANESE OFFICIALS INVESTIGATING RECENT EXPLOSION NEAR HOME OF KAMAL JUNBLATT, ACCORDING TO SURETE GENERAL COMMISSIONER HAFIZ CHEHADE, BELIEVE NEARBY IRAQI BAATH PARTY OFFICE RATHER THAN JUNBLATT'S RESIDENCE WAS INTENDED TARGET. AL MUHARRIR REPORTS A NUMBER OF EXPLOSIONS DESTROYED CARS AND SHOPS IN AYN AR-RAMMANAH.
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